



# The Ripline

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Issue 1

2001/2002

**NEWSLETTER OF THE BRISTOL UNIVERSITY HOT AIR BALLOONING SOCIETY  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE UWE HOT AIR BALLOONING SOCIETY**

Welcome to The Ripline, the BUHABS and UWEHABS newsletter, which you can expect through your letter box every month (don't forget to tell us if you move!). Most of this issue is devoted to the technicalities of flying with the clubs. New members should read this newsletter carefully and keep it for reference during the year. You don't need to know anything about ballooning or balloons, but it is important that you are familiar with our signing up process. I hope you enjoy this issue and the rest of

## PRESIDENTIAL WELCOME

Hello and Welcome to BUHABS and UWEHABS. This is my second year as President and I hope BUHABS will continue to go from strength to strength. BUHABS members have had an exciting summer with a trip to Vermenton in France for 10 days. Some lucky members have also been to Metz, the largest biennial European balloon meet, where we flew with around 600 other balloons. Quite an experience! Our friends at Bath and Loughborough University balloon teams have also been sunning themselves in Italy and France. Back in the UK we will be flying if the weather is kind to us, although we will have to be more careful because of foot and mouth, so remember to clean your boots and prepare to be disinfected! Here's to soft landings and some memorable flights this year. Make the most of the chance to come flying and crewing this year and have some fun,

Simon Jenkins

PS. We are looking for a new Social Secretary to entertain and amuse one of the largest societies in the Union. If you think you would like to organise some top nights out and pub lunches for BUHABS then get in touch with me or the committee ASAP. [REDACTED]

## BUHABS AND UWEHABS FIRST SOCIAL NIGHT

**WEDNESDAY 17 OCTOBER 2001 - 8:00 PM  
OUTSIDE THE BRISTOL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS UNION BUILDING**

The main idea of this first social event, aside from the getting horribly drunk, is to give you a chance to meet the clubs committee and the other members as these are the people that you will be flying off into the blue yonder with. It will also give you a chance to ask the committee any questions that may be worrying you about ballooning. This evening promises to be a right laugh (the BUHABS committee are renowned for their dancing skills). We look forward to seeing you there.

**ALL MEMBERS WELCOME!!!**

## THE END OF THE SUMMER

### NORTHAMPTON FIESTA AND THE BRITISH NATIONALS 2000

Unfortunately due to the Foot & Mouth outbreaks at the beginning of this year we were unable to do many trips and balloon meets in this country. So we bring you an article on one of last years more memorable excursions.

After a period of flying B5 every day while Lee ran the Italy trip, I was fortunate enough to fly the club balloon from the Bristol Fiesta on the Friday morning slot. There were a couple more flights in Bristol and then we ended the summer in style by taking B5 to the Northampton Fiesta to fly our sponsors, en-route to Castle Howard, North Yorkshire, to take part for the first time in the British National Hot-Air Ballooning Championships.

We left Bristol at about 2AM to arrive in Northampton in time for the press flight on the Friday morning. Lee was our pilot for the trip – not only for the championships but for Northampton too, as sponsor flying requires a CPL. Also on the trip were Simon J, Tim L and Emilio Garcia. Mark Streat would meet us later in Northampton.

#### *Northampton – “dodgy met...”*

Team BUHABS arrived in Northampton in time for the Friday morning flight. After emptying the contents of the van (bar the balloons) into the halls of residence where we were staying we crossed the road to the launchsite for briefing. Our flight director for the weekend was Les Perfield, and in the first of many briefings we were told that the wind was too strong for flying. With that information in hand we all went back to the halls to catch up on some sleep. Later, we prepared for the evening flight and noticed on the way to briefing that the wind was still fairly strong and gusty. To our surprise Les gave the go ahead for flying anyway. About half of the pack flew that night and we were not among them. After listening to the aviation weather forecasts (TAFs) earlier in the afternoon we had decided not to invite the sponsors to Northampton for that evening's flight. We sat smugly on our launch position and watched some of the balloons fly as others burnt holes in their envelopes whilst struggling to inflate in the wind.

The next morning the sponsors came along but it was obvious to all that the predicted 40% chance of showers had in fact turned into a 100% chance and we all got very wet. The wet weather gave us a chance to look round the stalls at the event and that's when we came across the army surplus stall. With blue BUHABS helmets and flying B4 at the nationals anyway, it only took six ex-army shirts, one UN flag for the crown rope and some spray paint to put “UN” on the helmets and we were transformed into team B-FOR! My shirt happened to come with two stripes on the epaulettes, which tortured Lee greatly. So much so that he went back to the chap who ran the stall to get three put on his. Lee declared that a CPL should have more stripes than a PPL, so that was that. Simon then spent the rest of the

holiday whinging that a PUT should have at least one stripe! As it was, everyone thought we were all nuts so it didn't really matter.

The Saturday evening's flight was called on, and as we climbed out of the launchsite we tracked slowly to the east. A competition had been set for the flight and Lee decided that this would be the perfect opportunity to get some practice in for the next week's flying. The event organisers had positioned a cross in a field about six kilometers from the launchsite and Lee decided to climb to find the right wind. This was all very well and the balloon provided the perfect platform to get some spectacular pictures of Northampton. However, I had climbed into the basket half an hour earlier on a lovely warm summer's day in just my T-shirt. This being the case I spent the 4500' leg of our



**Climbing out over the lake at Castle Howard Estate**

flight sitting on the floor of the basket huddled up to keep warm! We eventually descended and hurled the marker about a kilometer from the target. Although a kilometer sounds a fair distance, it proved to be very competitive on the day as the winds were not favorable. We came third.

We eventually landed at sunset in a stubble field to the south of the target. Unfortunately the only access to the field was too narrow to get the basket through and with daylight fading fast we tried to fly B5 across the wind into the next field where the van had parked. We deployed the drop line and I had first attempt at flying the balloon over the trees. Even with everyone pulling on the line, and only Simon accompanying me in the balloon, the wind proved to be too strong. We tracked along the trees and not wanting to go free flying as the sun was setting I landed the balloon before the line ran out. We pulled the balloon back up the field and Lee tried his hand at the manoeuvre but the same thing happened. We resigned ourselves to having a huge carry out but luck was on our side as the farmer let us drive across about four fields to park up next to the balloon!

I drove on the retrieve of Sunday morning's flight. All ninety balloons took off again and made for an impressive sight over what was a fairly unimpressive town skyline. The

steerable conditions meant that nearly twenty balloons (including B5) landed in the same field. Not wanting to drive on without permission all the retrieves pulled up along side. Unfortunately so did half of Northampton to gawp at the spectacle. Gridlock ensued and we spent an hour in a traffic jam in the middle of nowhere! Not wanting to get tangled up in the frustrations of locals who were getting a bit abusive we deployed the flashing light, locked up the van in the middle of the road and escaped to the relative calm of the field to help pack away!

Sunday night came and the Coventry TAF was giving thunderstorms, cumulonimbus and showers. At briefing however, Les was giving what turned out to be a load of old cobblers. We were told at briefing that the CB's were dispersing and that the active clouds were to the north - the opposite direction to our flight, and too far away to worry about. Lee was faced with the usual dilemma of *do we fly because it looks nice or do we cancel because the TAF is bad*. After much discussion we decided to cancel. With Balloons taking off all around us and the tannoy announcing perfect flying conditions to the crowd, we told the sponsors the flight was off. Not surprisingly they were pretty pissed off, and despite our best efforts to explain the situation to them they left looking less than impressed. We were left standing on the launch field with only the German Sausage team (don't ask!) who had also cancelled as the rest of the pack flew off into the blue sky, silhouetted against some rather sinister looking towering cumulus clouds to the south. Feeling pretty low we packed up and went over to the briefing room to hand back our basket banners and landing cards as this was the last flight of the event. The balloons had only been in the air about fifteen minutes when we heard reports of some balloons doing emergency landings on the edge of town due to a hailstorm. As we drove out of the site we could see that the sky had turned a deep purple. Within five minutes lightening began to strike to the south of the town. The weather worsened as we drove south to find a pub for dinner. Within an hour of the last balloon launching, lightening and rain were hammering down in one of the most ferocious storms I've seen in ages. Reassured in the knowledge that Les would be flight director at the Nationals, we prepared for our journey to North Yorkshire on the following day.

#### *The Nationals – "don't look up, I can see daylight!"*

The B-FOR van chugged into the school where we would be staying. Despite the uniforms and flashing light we failed to resolve the problem of our room being given to another team, and team BUHABS was forced to pitch camp in the school lounge. Conveniently for us this meant lots of space (enough to store B5 in the corner) and the only TV in the building – bonus!

Monday evening's briefing was attended in uniform and after spending an hour watching veterans of the competition argue over the rules we decided that silly uniforms should be stowed for emergency use only so that the serious business of competition could begin...

Les read the met for the first evening's flight – more thunderstorms. Rather coincidentally they appeared to be moving away from us; hmmm where have we heard that before? Out on the launch field we awaited a decision to fly or not. After some considerable time waiting for Les to decide whether to kill us or not he said that it would be too dangerous, as the CB's hadn't dispersed yet. The next morning we saw in the paper that a waterspout had wreaked havoc on the river Humber not too far away and were glad to have stayed on the ground.

Tuesday morning's flight was called on, and as we climbed out over the Castle Howard lake Lee settled into the flight,



**Paul Spellward descends through the mist to the target on Wednesday morning's flight**

using the wind to steer us to the first of three targets. As we descended towards the first, the balloons jostled for position. As we came in, we began to catch up with Lindsay Muir's V56. As the target approached, the equator of her balloon almost touched our basket. Not being able to predict whether she would climb or descend Lee gave up using the burner and we resorted to praying we wouldn't make contact. Luck was on our side and we continued our flight with a first score of 35 metres. We navigated off the map until at last we could see the next target – a T-junction. Observers and crew swarmed over the target below. Lee found the perfect layer of air. As we sailed over the target I lobbed the marker. After a heart stopping moment when the marker headed for the roof of a lorry that was pulling out of the junction we scored a very respectable 6m! Our final goal was our choice and defined before takeoff. Unfortunately this proved a right bugger to get to and we scored 350m which I suppose isn't too bad considering the target was 14km from the launchsite.

Both flights on Wednesday went ahead and I retrieved for both. We had both success and miserable failure but a lot of fun in the process. Wednesday evening's flight was a flight to a goal set to the west of Castle Howard. We lost several positions that night as Fiesta (now a bit of a porous wreck) ran out of fuel and Lee was forced to land in a field of cabbages! With phone coverage

very sketchy we found it hard to find the balloon. On our



**Lindsay Muir has a drag landing in the corner of the target field**

way we noticed that no-one actually got to the goal as a sea breeze kicked in and propelled the pack back towards Castle Howard at about 10kts which made for some exciting landings! We drove to where we thought Lee would be and waited. Darkness set in after an amazing sunset, and out of the pitch black emerged a Landrover with the balloon lashed to the tailgate. Despite landing in crop the farmer had been so excited to have the balloon land in his field he drove across the cabbages to help retrieve it!

I flew with Lee again on the Thursday morning. This time the tasks were a judge declared goal, pilot declared goal, fly on and a maximum distance double drop. Five marker drops – bloody hell! The balloons launched, and as we crept over the trees towards the first target we began to converge. As other balloons pressed into the sides of the envelope Lee burnt to replace lost air. Balloons packed in

from the front and rear as we descended into a cold, still layer of air. Unable to move in any direction but up we pressed the eject button and popped out of the pack. Thankful to be in clear air we dropped at 21m. As we looked back we saw Paul had held his nerve and as he hovered above the target we watched his drop. A score of 0.05m – amazing! The next target proved to be our best drop of the competition too at 1.5m. Spurred on by this we quickly found a layer of air that took us towards the next goal.

As we approached behind Mike Howard we saw him open his smart vent (a system similar to our parachute valve but more severe). His balloon vented huge amounts of air and got visibly thinner ahead of us before accelerating towards the target. Lee followed suit and for a considerable amount of time the sun shone in around the edges of the parachute. As we came thundering down, David Bareford (the world champion) converged from the left. His ability to steer his balloon in the opposite direction to the wind had astounded us before, but this time it caught us out completely. As he climbed to get some right, Lee opened both blast valves to slow our descent. After a quick glance at each other and a few cries of “oh shit!” we hauled the map board back into the basket. We just managed to get all the sharp objects back inside before we piled into the side of his balloon. A few seconds of being squashed into the side of the Ultramagic demonstrator followed before the double burn kicked in. We rocketed away and after more venting we again sped towards the ground. Rounding out just above the hedgerow we dropped the marker and scored 30m. Happy to be alive we continued our flight.

After all that burning, fuel was running low and we gave up on the max distance task; instead having a very gently landing in a stubble field by the river. That morning's flight was not so exciting for Mark however. He was observing for a pilot in another balloon and unfortunately for Mark, his pilot had taken enough fuel for a round-the-world flight! We watched as Mark's balloon hovered over the adjacent field. After packing up we received a text message simply saying “very bored”. With no prospect of seeing Mark before sunset we went to breakfast without him.

As the competition went on we fell further down the scoreboard. Experienced pilots and more fuel-efficient balloons had beaten us. Thursday PM saw our most exciting landing which left Emilio with a bruised knee and by Friday lunchtime the competition was over. Our final position was 23<sup>rd</sup> – a valiant first attempt at competition ballooning. Crispin Williams became National Champion and Paul came 5<sup>th</sup>. The journey home seemed to take forever and we were only kept awake by Freestyler, which had become a bit of an anthem for the trip, blaring from the van radio.

So that was that. A couple more club flights back in Bristol finished off the flying season and I logged my 100<sup>th</sup> flight! Roll on some good weather and next summer's escapades...

Tim Dudman

## UWEHABS

UWEHABS is a new venture by BUHABS with the aid of myself, Pete Davies, a UWE student. I have been involved with ballooning through my family since the age of seven and when my older brother came to University in Bristol he joined the club and trained with them to become a pilot. I won't bore you with the details in-between but about 10 years down the line I found myself coming to University in Bristol, but instead at UWE. I still joined the club though as BUHABS is not exclusively for Bristol University students, and thankfully became their next P.U.T. Just to show how integrated the club actually is, the president prior to Simon Jenkins was our pilot Lee Hooper, also a UWE student.

Last year I became part of the BUHABS committee as Secretary and along with it began to investigate starting a joint club up at UWE, giving our students an opportunity to experience Hot air ballooning through a university club. The UWE Students Union agreed to the club just in time for last year's Freshers fair and so the club began.

Unfortunately the number of members we attracted last year was quite low but we are hoping to double that number this year. If you are an UWEHABS member reading this I ask you to please bear with us as the two clubs adjust to accommodate each other's needs. I also urge any keen UWEHABS members to contact me and let me know what you want out of the club or better still help out with the social running of the club and become part of the committee. I look forward to seeing you through out the year,

Peter Davies

## BUHABS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The committee is elected at the AGM to help run the club. These fine people can be contacted using the details below, please try to direct any inquiries to a relevant person. Non urgent enquiries should be via e-mail, however 'phone calls are welcome in some cases, such as illness the night before you are

**SIMON JENKINS**

**PRESIDENT & PILOT (P.U.T)**

**PETER DAVIES**

**SECRETARY & PILOT (P.U.T)**

**SARAH NOLAN**

**TREASURER**

**SIMON CHURCH**

**TRANSPORT OFFICER**

**ED KAY**

**PAUL SPELLWARD**

**FLYING TREASURER & SENIOR PILOT**

**TIM DUDMAN**

**PILOT**

**LEE HOOPER**

**PILOT**



## BALLOONING WITH BUHABS

The rest of this issue is dedicated to the technicalities of going on a trip with BUHABS. It is intended to be informative for new members and a reminder for existing ones. On this page are some general points, and on the next how to sign up. Pages 8 and 9 include some frequently asked questions. The back page is a checklist which might be useful if kept. Please read all the information carefully. Please do not hesitate to e-mail the committee with any further questions.

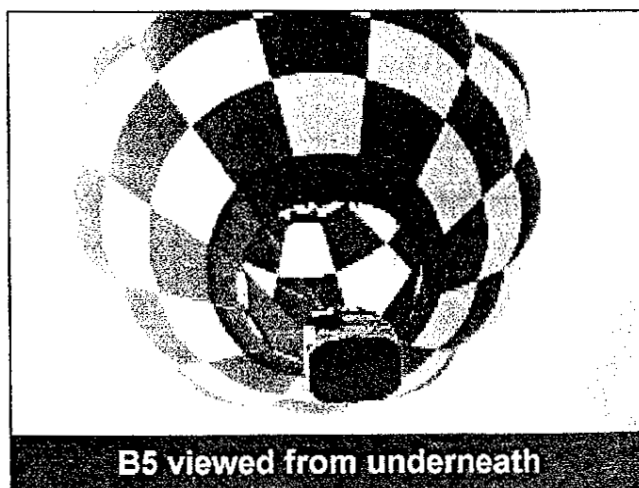
So, you have handed over your thirty pounds, and in return have become a member of the U.K.'s most active balloon club. You are eager to get airborne, but you may have a few concerns. First you might think, "Jeepers, what if I am the only new member there, I will look such a Wally", or words to that effect. Be reassured that there are usually a number of new members on most flights. Nobody expects you to be perfect at crewing, as the outing progresses you will learn about all the jobs that need to be done.

You may also be concerned about safety. Were you aware that ballooning is the safest form of aviation, and that BUHABS has an excellent safety record? All BUHABS pilots are fully qualified, after rigorous training from some of the country's most experienced pilots. We only fly in good weather conditions and will not fly if conditions are 'marginal'; for this reason you might see other balloonists flying when BUHABS flights are cancelled. Passenger safety is our number one priority.

The first thing you must remember about ballooning is that it is totally weather dependent. Be prepared to be disappointed, you may have to try a few times before you actually get to go out.

Information on how to sign up for trips is on the next page. On each trip the pilot and four people fly, and the driver and two others retrieve. On the sign up list you will see a drivers slot, this is for approved drivers only, who will know who they are.

Only those that fly have to pay the £12 contribution toward fuel costs, including the pilot. This money is just for fuel, we make no profits. It is considerably cheap compared with a commercial flight, which would be about £130. A record is kept of who flies and 'crewing points' are allocated. You gain one point for crewing and lose one when you fly, therefore selection for who to fly on a particular trip is based on who has the highest crewing points. This way it remains fair. If everyone is on equal points, a



draw will take place.

On the day remember to 'phone in, failure to do so will result in minus two crewing points. Trips usually last about four hours, and wear suitable clothes as retrieval may be muddy. It is traditional to celebrate a first flight with champagne, a tradition we encourage, so by all means bring along some bubbly! Also, don't forget your £12,

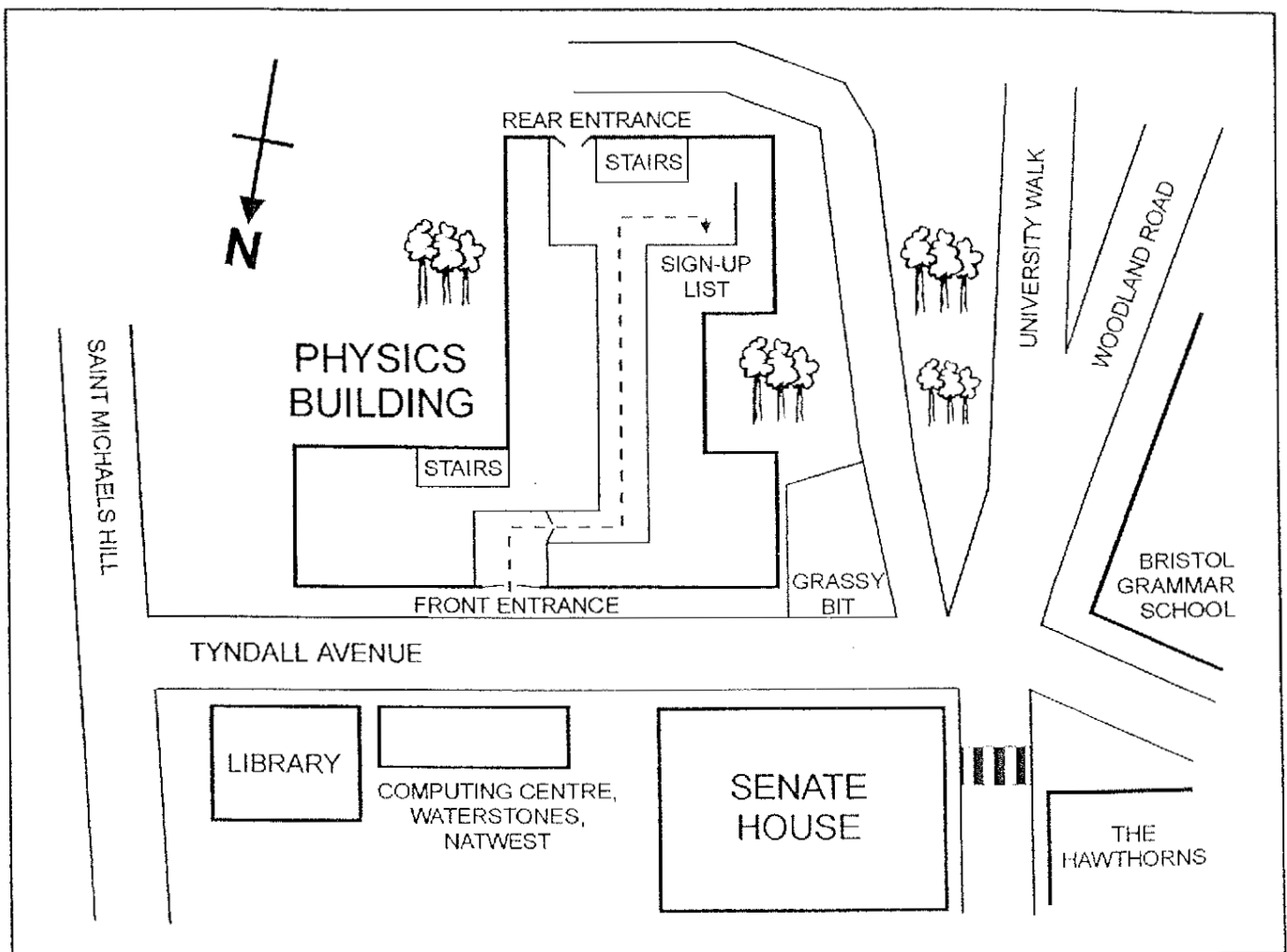


## 'PHONING IN & DIRECTIONS TO SIGN UP

Signing up lists are placed on the student societies notice board (see map) in the H. H. WILLS PHYSICS BUILDING. UWE members do not have to sign up on the board but instead have to phone in on Wednesday night. They are placed every week for 24 hours at the following time;

**THURSDAY 1:15 PM - FRIDAY 1:15 PM**

The Physics Building is situated on Tyndall Avenue opposite the Computing Centre, Waterstones and the Arts & Social Sciences library. There are four slots of which you may sign up for one. If there are still spaces in certain slots on Friday you may sign up for another space. On the signing up list you will find all the details of who you need to 'phone and at what time. Ballooning requires calm conditions and for this reason we only fly in the morning and evening. Therefore 'phone in times will reflect this. Typically in October, 'phoning in times will be approximately 0730 and 1600. They do get later and earlier though as winter approaches, so it is vital you know who to call and at what time for the slot you have signed up for.



**You MUST 'phone in at the time you have signed up for on the notice board, EVEN if you think the weather is bad (who knows, the pilot may have other ideas!). Failure to call will result in a loss of two crewing points and may render you very unpopular if a flight has to be cancelled through lack of crew. You will be told where to meet to go flying when you 'phone in.**

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ***What does everyone do when they get to the launch site?***

When we fly, we usually have a crew consisting of a pilot, trainee pilot, a driver, and up to five or six others. There are various jobs to be done when launching the balloon, and once you have been out a few times you will have done them all. Two people hold open the mouth (base) of the balloon whilst cold air is blown in, after which the pilot will heat the air with a burner. Another two people are needed to pull on the crown line, a rope attached to the top of the balloon, in order to keep the balloon down until it is properly inflated. One person operates the inflation fan and others stand by to put their weight on the basket as the balloon comes upright.

### ***What if I want to fly my boyfriend/girlfriend/parent/pet Godzilla?***

The basic answer is that you will not be able to. We have a commitment to our members to get them flown ASAP. Flying non-members and guests would make this task more difficult for us. However, the situation may change during holidays - sometimes with many students away spaces become available. We will discuss this in a later issue of The Ripline, but please do not pester pilots with such requests until we tell you it's okay. If whom you know is so keen to get airborne, they should join BUHABS. You should never sign anyone up on the notice board who is not a current member, -checks are made.

### ***Why do I have to 'phone in no matter the weather?***

Last year we had some slots where we actually left in the dark and rain. Upon arrival to the launch field the clouds had broken and the sun was beaming through. So you can see it's essential to 'phone in. Going out the night before and drinking too much alcohol is not our problem, and failure to call will result in the docking of two crewing points.

### ***How do I keep in touch with what is happening in BUHABS?***

The Ripline newsletter. This newsletter is the first of many that will be sent to you in the post, informing you of happenings in BUHABS. Every month The Ripline will bring you news of upcoming social events, reviews of past flights and hopefully a few laughs. It will not provide you with an accurate political comment on current affairs. You will also receive e-mails informing you of up-coming events. Also, check out our regularly updated website at [www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/Union/BUHABS/](http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/Union/BUHABS/). We have had over 4000 hits since February 2000!

### ***e-mail***

Every student has access to e-mail. Most new students need to register with the Computing Service for this facility. Most Halls of Residence now have computer access terminals in each individual room. All are connected to the University network. You will be added to the BUHABS mailing list if you know your e-mail address at the beginning of term. Otherwise, to add yourself, simply send a message to [majordomo@bris.ac.uk](mailto:majordomo@bris.ac.uk). All you need to say is 'Subscribe BUHABS', a message will be returned to you telling you about the mailing list. Using e-mail will increase your chances of flying, especially when weekday flights may be advertised with only a few hours notice. We therefore recommend you get fully acquainted with this essential facility.



## THE BALLOONING CHECKLIST

In order to simplify matters, here is a quick guide to going ballooning with BUHABS.  
(Note that if you are outside the main University or a member of UWEHABS, a different system applies - refer to earlier pages.)



Pay a visit to the Physics Notice board as soon as possible after 1:15 pm on Thursday. The list is subsequently removed at 1:15 pm on Friday, so you have 24 hours to sign up.



Sign your name in your preferred slot. Only one slot is allowed per person, but you may sign again on Friday if slots remain unfilled. If you sign up another club member other than yourself, YOU will be penalised if they fail to 'phone in, so beware! Please do not sign in the driver's slot if you are new to the club or are not an approved driver, the approved drivers know who they are.



Take a note of the EXACT day and time of the pilot you have to call along with the 'phone number of the pilot.



When the day of the flight arrives, give the pilot a bell at the exact time noted. The 'phone may be engaged while others call in, be persistent or use BT's very useful ring-back facility. It is vital you call in, even if the weather is appalling, you will lose two crewing points if you fail to call. Continual failure to call will result in so many negative crewing points you may never get to fly.



If the decision is to go, you will need to meet at the Union building at the time stated by the pilot (usually 30 - 60 minutes after the 'phone in). Pick ups can be arranged if you live a long way from the Union, from Stoke Bishop Halls for example. UWE members can be picked up from The Arches at the bottom of Gloucester road



You need to bring the following;

**12 of your English Pounds, in cash or cheque form; Suitable clothing (long sleeved jumper/sweater); Suitable footwear for retrieving in muddy West Country fields; Money for Breakfast/Drinks on the way home; An optional bottle of Bubbly to celebrate after!**



The trip will go to a launch site chosen by the pilot. The entire outing will take 4-5 hours, and you will later be dropped off from where you were picked up.



You will gain one crewing point if you 'retrieve' (stay on the ground and help) and lose one point if you fly. This way everyone gets to fly on at least 50% of their trips, as selection is done on points. In cases where everyone is on equal points Mr. Spellward's patented 'Shortest Blade of Grass' draw takes place on the launch field.

If you have any comments, queries, or quarrels with The Ripline (or if you feel like flexing your literary talents and writing an article yourself!) please don't hesitate to email me (Pete Davies) at the following address: [REDACTED]